



State of California—Health and Human Services Agency  
**Department of Health Services**



Governor

November 30, 2005

TO: Local Health Officers  
Directors of Environmental Health

SUBJECT: IMPACTS OF CYANOBACTERIA (BLUE GREEN ALGAE)  
BLOOMS ON RECREATION

You recently received notification of the Blue Green Algae (BGA) Workshop held on November 8<sup>th</sup> at the State Water Resources Control Board in Sacramento. The workshop was sponsored by USEPA and the intent was to exchange information on BGA, actually cyanobacteria, and learn about BGA blooms. Certain incidents in northern California and recent international symposia have heightened interest on the issue of BGA blooms and their possible impacts on recreational use of fresh water bodies.

This correspondence is being sent to give you a very brief introduction to the BGA issue and to advise you that you can find links to websites pertaining to various aspects of cyanobacteria and BGA blooms by visiting our website at <http://www.dhs.ca.gov/ps/ddwem/bluegreenalgae/index.htm>

Recent activities at the local, state, national and international level demonstrate an increasing interest in health concerns related to cyanobacteria and harmful algal blooms. In response, we're providing information and links (as noted above) to other sites that will be helpful to the public and to local, regional, and state public health and environmental health officials.

The concern is that when BGA blooms occur in water bodies, exposure to algae and their toxins can pose risks to humans, pets, livestock and wildlife. Exposure may occur by ingestion, dermal contact and also by aspiration or inhalation.

Risks to people may occur when recreating in water in which a BGA bloom is present, or from drinking water that uses a surface water source in which a BGA bloom is present.

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The Department of Health Services will meet with federal, state and local agencies to compile more information regarding cyanobacterial blooms and their impacts and will continue to post and update pertinent information on our website.

For further information pertaining to cyanobacteria, please visit our website listed above or contact our office at (916) 449-5661.

Sincerely,

**<original signed by>**

Robin R. Hook, Chief  
Environmental Management Branch